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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5324
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RHMFISS/39ABG CP INCIRLIK AB TU IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/425ABG IZMIR TU//CC// IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU//TCH// IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA/DSCA//
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE

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SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ SITREP 3: GROUND OPERATION CONTINUES,
GENERAL STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRESS REACTION

REF: A. ANKARA 0331

[1](#)B. ANKARA 0340

[1](#)1. (U) Turkish ground operations inside of northern Iraq continue, with Turkish troops supported by artillery and air strikes as well as helicopter gunships.

[1](#)2. (U) In a public announcement late on February 22, the Turkish General Staff (TGS) reported that operations are being carried out by Jandarma forces under the command of the Second Army, with the support of Turkish Air Force aircraft as well as helicopters and artillery. According to the announcements, 24 PKK terrorists and five Turkish military were killed in a clash that took place on February 22. The TGS also states that at least 20 more terrorists were killed by Turkish artillery and helicopter gunships, while an unknown number of additional PKK were likely killed or wounded by air strikes and long-range artillery fires. The military reports destroying many man-made and natural shelters used by PKK terrorists, as well as a considerable amount of ammunition, equipment and food supplies. The TGS statements also report that PKK terrorists, including some leadership, are fleeing south in panic.

[1](#)3. (U) Reacting to intense media speculation concerning the ongoing operation, the TGS issued other public announcements on February 22 criticizing media outlets for publishing false information and misleading photographs concerning the goals of the operation as well as the size and composition of the military units involved. The TGS statements also requested that credence not be given to statements in the press by unnamed military officials, and urged media organizations not to draw attention to announcements made by PKK-related organizations.

[1](#)4. (U) Turkish newspapers continue to speculate on the size and scope of the ground operation, which is reportedly code-named "Operation Sun," involves 2000 to 10000 troops, and will last up to two weeks. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak and nationalist-oriented Cumhuriyet report that the U.S. knew of an impending ground operation up to two weeks in advance and that Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff ADM Mullen sent Vice Chairman GEN Cartwright to Ankara on February 13 to discuss the details. All papers attribute to Secretary Rice comments that the U.S. "supports Turkey and is in solidarity with the government of Turkey," but that "Iraq's stability must not be harmed."

15. (U) Columnists from the left to the right of the political spectrum, including both secularist and Islamic leaning commentators, support the operations but call for the government to take political, economic, and diplomatic steps to deal with the Kurdish problem. Yalcin Dogan of mainstream Hurriyet writes that "this is the 25th land operation since the 1980s and we are still talking about land operations. I hope that this land operation leads the government to talk to the Iraqi government, to initiate dialogue with (Masoud) Barzani, and to develop a comprehensive plan." Derya Sezak of mainstream Milliyet writes that "Turkey cannot achieve results unless military actions are attached to a civilian solution that includes democratic measures and promotion of a culture of peaceful coexistence." Oral Calislar of nationalist-oriented Cumhuriyet writes "historically, Turkey has treated the Kurdish issue from the security perspective as a threat. The policy so far treats the Kurds as a community that needs to be assimilated. Even if these military operations succeed, the Kurdish issue will not be over. Political and democratic steps are needed." Ali Bayramoglu of Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak writes "operations are fine, but even if they are successful, what about taking democratic steps to address the Kurdish issue?" This type of military operation may harm Turkey's relations with the EU. It will be interesting to see if democratic steps will follow military action."

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